

FLYING FEAR

- *Eberron* -

*They were deadly on the ground
Now they are flying*

Shadows of the fiend - chapter 1 of 4

A D&D Eberron adventure for tier 1 characters



by Davide C. Milano



Abstract

Welcome to **Flying Fear**, a D&D Eberron adventure, part 1 of 4 of the “Shadows of the fiend” story.

This adventure takes place on the flying ship **Oceanus**, an elemental flying vessel of the Lyrandar family which is offering traveling services to 25 normal passengers, the player’s characters... and someone else.

A journey on a ship like this one seems safe: *what could possibly go wrong?*

Adjusting the adventure

This adventure is designed for **5 1st-level characters**. The “Shadows of the fiend” story is part of a story arc that should lead the group from 1st level to 5th within 8 chapters.

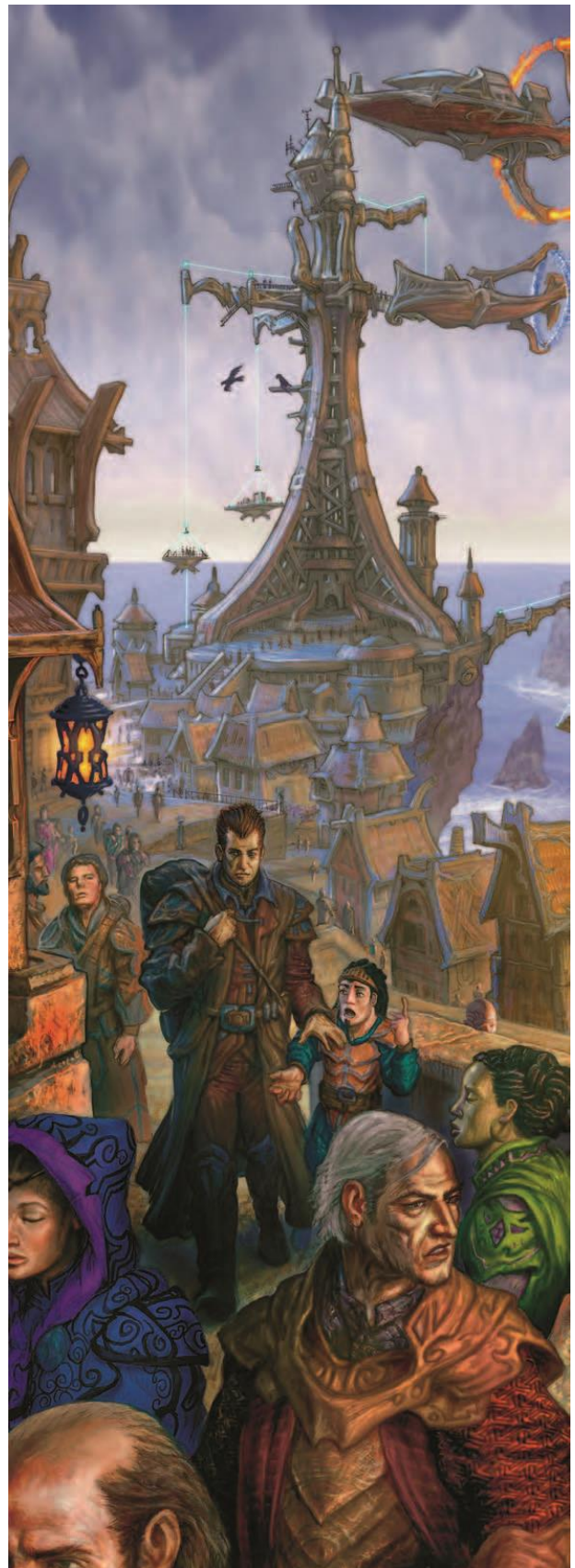
If you play it as a one-shot adventure, anyway, you can find suggestions about how to increase the difficulty of the encounters for different groups. If you have a smaller or larger party reduce or increase the difficulty by one. If your group has higher level characters, increase the difficulty by one as well.

Shadows of the fiend

The “Shadows of the fiend” set of stories is designed to offer a good way to shift from a set of new characters to a group of new characters. Each chapter explores tips and situations to develop bonds between the characters, both PCs and NPCs.

“Shadows of the fiend” uses rules of [13th moon – Eberron Shared Campaign](#), which you can download for free.

Characters will need 2 chapters to obtain a level up. If you don’t use these rules, you can adjust XP rewards accordingly.



Introduction

This adventure takes place on the Flying Ship **Oceanus**, an elemental flying vessel of the Lyrandar family which is offering traveling services to 25 normal passengers, the player's characters, 10 dangerous prisoners which are being moved to a detention facility, and a stowaway warforged named **Bringer**.

Some time after the lift-off, used to introduce the environment to the players, the 10 prisoners will break free with the help of Roman Dylar, actually **Moshar d'Phiarlan**: the elf was hired by an unknown man to find Bringer, and recover some unspecified intel from her. Setting the prisoners free he'll have time and distraction required to accomplish his mission.

The prisoners will prove themselves tougher than expected: they'll manage to hijack the ship and route for a mysterious island, planning to execute every other passenger or crewmember.

Player characters will be the only ones skilled enough to save the day: how many people will they be able to bring to safety by the end of this long journey?

Development

The adventure takes place in three acts.

A quick **Setup** is prepared to create some common ground for the group, using PC's backgrounds, personalities, ideals, bonds and flaws.

In **Act I – The Lift-off** PCs are ready to board the airship, get comfortable and look around for potential hooks for story development.

In **Act II – The Hijack** the prisoners are set free and, probably, will attack the prisoners. Their fight is interrupted by one of the prisoners taking a hostage, locking the PCs in the same cages once used for the prisoners.

In **Act III – Revenge** the PCs are set free by Bringer and face the prisoners, only to find themselves without a pilot. Off-route and without a properly trained dragonmarked helmsman, the Oceanus crashes on a mysterious island, leaving the PCs and dozens of untrained passengers and crewmen in the wild.

What happens next?

This first tier1 adventures for 13th moon are designed in 2 storylines of 4 chapters. The first storyline, "Shadows of the fiend", is made by

- **Flying fear** (level 1) – hijack of the Oceanus and crash on the mysterious island of Durast
- **Ruins of madness** (level 1) – exploration of the island of Durast and discovery of lost cyren soldiers
- **The Shadowflame altar** (level 2) – finding the lost temple of Nal Shalor, the group will find something unsettling and a well known elemental
- **Tides of danger** (level 2) – after repairing the ship, will the characters be able to find a way back home?

NPCs presented in these adventures should help introduce special themes of the setting: widespread magic, savage frontiers, faiths and religions, clear and obscure conflicts. This should help with an introduction and a chance for the PCs to build their relations with NPCs and other PCs.

Setup

Duration: 30 min

Before getting to the adventure, give the players some time to outline their character. There are some different opportunities to use, try to find out your ones, so that you can find out the best one for the group you are playing with. Here come some suggestions about this section: use one of them, make a good mix or create your own method.

Round robin

Pretty much the easy path, each player gets some little time to describe his own character, pointing out relevant quirks for the occasion. This is the most classic way to introduce the characters each other, it gives control about the situation, but it can be hard for shy players which can feel disoriented not having a hook at all to start talking.

Opening credits

A structure like the opening credits of a TV serial can be helpful to introduce the characters. Ask a player to describe a cutscene for his character, starting from a description of the environment given by you or from a situation at his will.

After that description, you can shift the focus to another character, going on this way composing the intro of this episode.

Linked backgrounds

This tip can help to give structure to the previous examples: when shifting from one character to another, select in some way (your choice, players' choice or random roll) two personal characteristics from their background (like the *ideal* of one character and the *bond* of another) and ask them to tell the others an episode of their past that they lived together which outlines these two specific characteristics. You can use both the *Player's Handbook* characteristic and the ones from other sourcebooks, like the *Xanathar's Guide to Everything* and the *Wayfinder's Guide to Eberron*.



Act I – The Liftoff

Duration: 45mins/1 hour

After the players have introduced their characters, you can introduce the situation: the characters are passengers of the Oceanus, an airship headed from Sharn to Fairhaven. The flight is quite expensive, so ask the various characters how they managed to get onto the ship. Let them quite free to choose their own way to get into trouble.

After the boarding and lift-off procedures, which require the passengers to leave weapons and dangerous equipment with their luggage, let them roam a bit on the ship: they can become confident with the ship locations, which will be a great advantage in subsequent scenes.

During the lift-off a group of guards will intervene to secure the passage to board the prisoners and lead them to their cages.

A civilized place

Use this introduction to surround characters with what's special about the setting: the flight starts in Sharn, a renaissance metropolis with magically stabilized skyscrapers filled with a good amount of low level magic users who *are* the technology of the place. Tickets, identity documents, guards who detect magic with special eyeglasses, gnomes who *are* the phone. Try to focus on a different scene for each character, to show these characteristics.

The upper deck

The external section of the ship is a large deck where crewmen are at work to maintain, clean and improve ship functionalities. While flying there is a beautiful sight from this location. Special NPCs can be found there.

Captain Shorel d'Lyrandar

The captain stays usually on the upper deck, welcoming the passengers and keeping track of the most important ones. He will be happy to see the Countess and less happy to see the Count her betrothed.



Countess Louette Lorianne

Young and coquettish, Louette is the only heir of a rich wand artisan and merchant of Sharn. Her family managed to improve their social status betrothing her to a young nobleman, Count George Blacktail. The two are definitely not in love and both unhappy of the situation. Louette will stay on the deck as long as possible before the lift-off to enjoy the sight of the Dagger river.

Kevin, the ship boy

Always eager to help, Kevin, or, as the Captain calls him, the “little rat”, is Shorel d’Lyrandar protégé. Unknown to many, Kevin is the illegitimate son of Shoren and a minor Cannith noble. Unbeknown to anyone, in a tenday he will manifest an aberrant dragonmark. Kevin is the only one knowing about the presence of Bringer on the ship and he’s keeping a secret about it, due to his love for warforgeds.

The middle deck

The middle deck is the zone of the ship intended for the passengers: there is a zone with armchairs with safety belts, used during lift-offs, landings, and turbulence, a bar and a corridor with rooms and bunks for the passengers.

Count George Blacktail

Young, handsome and daring, George is the firstborn of his family, minor nobles of Breland. He brags a lot about military and combat training but in facts he never really fought and he’s not able to sustain a fight. He admires adventurers, envying their free life. He doesn’t like Louette because of her vanity and her carelessness about her family business. He will manifest a Mark of Handling in later adventures.

Roman Dylar [Moshar d’Phiarlan]

Mercenary in disguise, Moshar is trying to find Bringer, the warforged, to retrieve a message he is carrying for his anonymous customer. He has managed to give Kurgaath weapons and a little magic to break free and spread chaos on the ship, giving him the time to search and retrieve his bounty. Finding the correct message will be impossible, however, so Moshar will try to protect his bounty until he is done.

Sam Guilleran

Bartender and good singer, this old human (with some elven blood, given his good shape) keeps his ears open at every time. The Captain trusts his wisdom above everyone else on the ship, since he has seen so much in his long life.

The lower deck

This part of the ship has 3 main purposes: to give crewmembers room to move quickly on the ship without bothering the passengers, to store provisions and to get to the cages for prisoners. There is a special boarding hatch to get directly inside this deck from the docks.

Manuel d’Deneith

Manuel is a trained soldier, assigned by the Sentinels Marshals to watch over the prisoners. If someone has a soldier background he can know Manuel and speak to him before the lift-off. Manuel will be the first victim of the prisoners when they break free – this should be used to give an assessment of the danger that the prisoners represent

Jerome Luliac [prisoner]

The most dangerous prisoner, Jerome is a cold-blooded killer, extremely cunning and deranged. He is watched very close by the guards, which is part of his plan: he gave tools and weapons to the other prisoners to escape, kill the guards and the pilot, flying to an island where a great treasure is hidden. Jerome has statistic of a **Spy** with 50hp, a dagger, and an aberrant dragonmark (*Firebolt* cantrip and *Burning hands*/long rest). Add 1d6 damage if the PCs are 3rd level or higher.

Kurgaath [prisoner]

Kurgaath is the main ally of Jerome: brutal and disciplined, he is a prisoner for murder and grand theft. His father was executed by a member of the Lyrandars and because of that his hate for the Lyrandar family burns like the sun. Statistics of a **Hobgoblin** with 25 hp. Add 1d6 damage if the PCs are 3rd level or higher.

Bringer

A stowaway, this warforged was designed to fetch a message and in the last days of the Last War and he got it. After that, he never managed to deliver his message since the recipient was dead. He decided to live his own life ever since, until he nearly escaped Moshar, who almost killed him. He runs away since then, trying to figure out how to get rid of his stalker and start a new life. He hides in a crate near the provisions, unnoticed by everyone except Kevin.

The others

The Oceanus is carrying

- 30 other passengers (statistics of a **Commoner**)
- 10 **guards**
- 12 sailors (statistics of a **Bandit**)
- 15 prisoners (statistics of a **Bandit**)

How about more characterization?

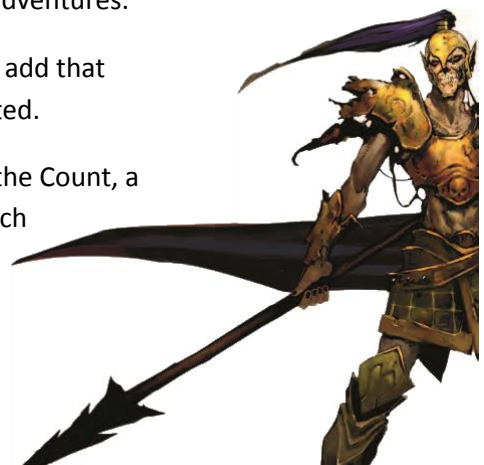
Feel free to add and adjust characters at your judgement. Some of these NPCs can be easily replaced by very particular player characters: Bringer and Louette, for example, can be replaced by a fitting PC with little-to-none adventure adjustments.

One of the PCs can be a prisoner instead of a passenger, maybe for a mistake he made or because of a corrupted judge. Find out why: it can be important on subsequent adventures.

One of the PCs can be a private eye looking for someone: be free to add that someone, someone related or to modify one of the NPCs to be related.

Enrich the NPCs which the PCs seems interested of: add a friend of the Count, a chaperone for Louette, a little pet for Kevin – anything that can enrich the story your players seem interested to develop.

NPCs are low on description for good: depending on your group composition you can prefer nobles, dragonmarked, merchants or a wide array. Choose the best option to better start relationships with your PCs. You can manage to make this adventure your own adventure: **do so**. It will be good.



Act II – The Hijack

Duration: 30/45min

The flight will require some day to reach his destination, but a change will happen really soon: during the first night of travel, the prisoners will break free, killing the guards and seize the Captain. They will need more time than planned to attune to the ship and gain access on the armory, so they will not be able to secure their position before dawn, when some of the passengers are already up at the bar. The prisoners will try to hide the hijack from the passengers until they have weapons and resources secured, acting in place of the crewmembers.

Something strange...

At this point there are many opportunities for the characters to notice that something is going wrong. A successful **CD15** check (depending on the situation) will give the PCs a clue. Some examples:

- They can notice that the ship is off route by checking the landscape: a Wisdom(Survival) check is required to notice that the ship is heading south-east instead of north – it's quite hard due to cloudy and rainy weather.
- They can notice, especially if they interacted with members of the crew the day before, that crewmen seem different. A successful Intelligence(History) or Intelligence(Vehicles[any]) check will show that the sailors are doing their job really badly, like newbies.
- The Captain is kept locked in his cabin – Louette will tell anyone who interacted with her the day before that *"Shorel will not receive me, maybe there is some problem on board"*.
- Kevin is missing and no one on the crew really knows anything about him

Again, the interactions from Act I should drive the PCs into discovering the hijack.

...before the storm

When this happens, as soon as the prisoners understand they are discovered, they attack: a group of two prisoners (statistics of a **Bandit**) plus one prisoner for each PC will start the attack. Remember that the PCs should not have any kind of weapon available, but they are on a ship and, depending on the location, the fight can bring unforeseen consequences. This encounter can be lethal for the party, which will be defeated and imprisoned, not killed. If the party is victorious then Kurgaath will show up with some passengers as hostages, forcing the group to surrender. Give PCs *inspiration* for that good result.

Act III – Revenge

Duration: 30/45min

Once captured and imprisoned, the PCs will find themselves in the same cages the prisoners were held at the start. They are locked with all the other passengers with a couple of ex-prisoners keeping an eye on them. Use this time to outline that the PCs are the only ones with a chance to defeat the bad guys in combat, since all the others are just ordinary people.

After a while, time that the PCs can use to get a **short rest**, Bringer shows up, led by curiosity or by Kevin. He'll disapprove the violence of the prisoners and knocks one of them out. Then, after the other stabs him quite badly, he puts the second to rest with a *sleep* spell. He proceeds to open the cages and to help the PCs finding their gear.

Try to let the players understand that if any of the passengers gets involved in the fight, someone among them will end up killed, but they can come anyway.

Get this ship back!

The PCs are in the lower deck, fully equipped and with a lot of tools from the ship at their disposal. They can end up making any sort of plan to reach the Captain's cabin to get control of the ship: let them be creative, like the heroes they should be. They can find a couple of **bandits** on their way.

When they finally reach the Captain's cabin, they will find Jerome, Kuurgath and 2 prisoners, surprised by the PCs if they didn't fail anything coming there. Jerome will fight to the death: he's not willing to let go when he is so close.

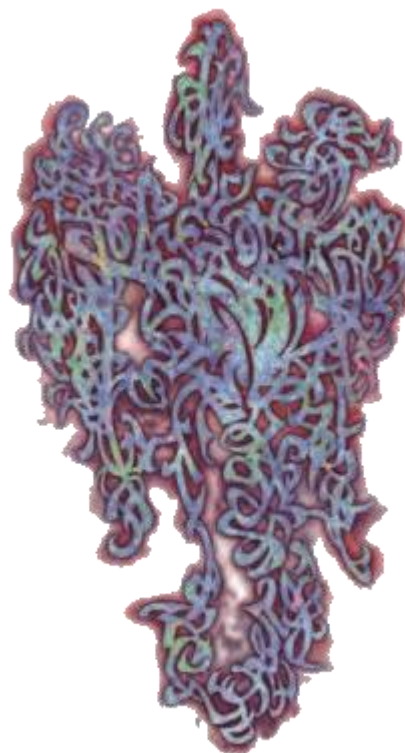
If some of the passengers came with the PCs, each round a prisoner will use an action to kill one of the passengers.

After the fight, it will be terribly clear that no one can handle the ship: the captain and Jerome, the only two with a greater dragonmark on the ship, are unavailable. The PCs can try to be creative to save the day: give *inspiration* to anyone bringing some creative solution but, in the end, the ship will crash on an island far away from the coast.

No one can communicate with the city, they are lost in the sea while the elemental of the ship is raging, trying to get loose: will our heroes be able to save everyone?

Rewards

Each player (and DM as well) gains **1 XPC** and **1 TP**



A special thank you...

...to *Ziggy and the spiders*, because they made me grow up as a DM and as a writer.
...to all people from [UESM](#) who helped me reviewing and playtesting this adventure.

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